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ABSTRACT

As part of an effort to identify states' roles and responsibilities in Indian education, major unresolved problems in Indian education were identified by survey and on-site visits in Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma, and South Dakota. Educators, government officials, parents, students, and tribal officials were surveyed regarding educational programs and practices, educational finance, legislative and policy issues, and interpersonal and interagency relationships. Most of the 149 respondents agreed that: 1) program evaluations and studies of achievement differences between Indian and non-Indian students are needed; 2) Indian education is not a major state priority; 3) federal, but not state, policies are often a barrier to meeting Indian educational needs; 4) social and health problems affect Indian students' academic achievement; and 5) there is little interagency cooperation to address educational needs of Indian students. Although educators and government officials believed that schools met the needs of Indian children, that Indian-school relations were good, and that current funding mechanisms were adequate, parents and tribal officials disagreed. Among the most significant unresolved issues noted were: parental involvement with Indian education; basic skills for Indians; cross-cultural staff and teacher training; and the need for Indian teachers and school administrators. The results are reasonably applicable to other states. (SE)

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INDIAN EDUCATION

Problems in Need of Resolution

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INDIAN EDUCATION

Problems in Need of Resolution



Education Commission of the States
Denver, Colorado
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Report No. 136

Indian Education Project
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November 1980

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The Indian Education Project of the Education Commission of the States (ECS) has two primary goals: (1) to identify and discuss the states' involvement in the education of Indian students; and (2) to suggest ways to coordinate federal, local and tribal activities so that state responsibilities to Indian education may be effectively met.

The five states that participated in the study are Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma and South Dakota. A national advisory task force composed of Indian and non-Indian leaders primarily from these states gathered and synthesized pertinent information about existing practices and programs. Through research and task force input and concurrence, the project staff will prepare and disseminate a series of project reports nationwide.

The task force will suggest program modifications — either through policy changes or the legislative process — that could be of value to the participating states, as well as to other states with Indian populations. In addition the project seeks to determine promising practices that can be shared.

The Education Commission of the States Task Force statements on Indian education stated herein recognize the federal trust responsibility established by the Congress of the United States through treaties made with Indian nations, legislation and court decisions. These precedents emphasize Indian sovereignty, Indian self-determination, and full involvement of the Indian communities at the local, state and national level in the establishment of educational policy for Indian citizens.

The Education Commission of the States Task Force also recognizes that the states have the primary responsibility to educate all Indian children and adults while the federal and tribal responsibility is to meet the unique educational and cultural needs of Indian students and adults.

It is further recognized that a cooperative effort between all groups concerned, regarding policy making and funding, must be implemented to achieve the full intent of this report — improved education for Indian people.

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Introduction

The Indian Education Project at the Education Commission of the States has undertaken research needed to examine the roles and responsibilities of the states in the education of Indian people, and to demonstrate how those roles and responsibilities should be coordinated with federal, local and tribal responsibilities.

To carry out the first task, the Indian Education Project is writing five reports. The first report was an examination of state, federal and tribal involvement in Indian education. This report, the second, discusses problems in need of resolution in Indian education and presents the results from two efforts: (1) a survey of educators and government officials in Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma and South Dakota; and (2) on-site visits by project staff and in-state consultants.

The second defined task, i.e., to develop mechanisms for coordinated involvement by the identified entities, was carried out by means of staff consultation with educators and government officials in the same five states. Policy recommendations and legislative alternatives will be developed, discussed and shared in a later report.

Survey Findings

The unresolved problems mentioned in this report, while not being all inclusive, represent the major concerns facing the successful education of Indian students. In summary, these concerns can be stated as follows:

- (1) Lack of Indian involvement in public school decision making
- (2) Lack of Indian-related curriculum
- (3) Lack of Indian teachers and administrators
- (4) Inadequate training for teachers of Indian students
- (5) Inadequate needs assessments and program evaluations of programs serving Indian students
- (6) Indian education is a low priority for state legislatures and
- (7) Indian parents need to learn how to properly motivate

their children to finish school and to help them succeed in the educational process.

General Methodology

In keeping with project objectives, the Indian Education Project selected five states — Alaska, Minnesota, Montana, Oklahoma and South Dakota, to participate in a comprehensive survey of programs, practices, education finance, legislative/policy issues, interpersonal relationships and interagency relationships. These states were selected for their geographic and political diversity, for their interest in Indian education, for the size of their Indian population, and for their interest in participating in project activities.

Indian Education Project staff visited and surveyed the following individuals in each of the five target states: the governor's aide for education; the state commissioner of education; the state director of Indian education; the director of curriculum; a member of the state board of education; key legislators concerned with education; chancellors for higher education; and, where states had Indian education associations, the directors of these organizations. In addition, the staff interviewed a secretary for education and cultural affairs, a director of special education, a director of affirmative action, and other officials in education and government.

Within each state, five local school districts were also selected to be surveyed by project staff and consultants. However, time constraints resulted in only three school districts being surveyed in Alaska and four in South Dakota. Geographic and political diversity and size of Indian student enrollment were the criteria for selection of the five districts. An experienced Indian consultant visited and surveyed principals, local school board members, parents, teachers, students, Indian education directors, curriculum coordinators and counselors working with education. Questions were asked and responses recorded in regard to Indian education programs; legislative and policy issues; interpersonal relationships among school administrators, teachers, parents and students; fiscal issues; and agency interrelationships involving state, federal, local and tribal government officials and educators.

One-hundred-forty-nine questionnaires were collected by the Indian Education Project staff at the Education Commission of the States. These responses, along with other material collected from the five target states, were studied, analyzed and tabulated by

project staff and a consultant. The results of the survey are discussed in this report, *Indian Education: Problems in Need of Resolution*, and in the third report, *Indian Education: Selected Programs and Practices*.

The five states selected for the study do not represent the total range of needs, problems, concerns and issues that confront Indian education in 50 diverse states. Nevertheless, the project staff believe the experiences of these states will be reasonably applicable to other states.

Survey Results

The distribution of the 149 questionnaires collected is as follows:

<u>State Level</u>	<u>Number</u>
State commissioners	5
State chancellors/commissioners of higher education	4
State school board members/chairmen	5
State legislators	5
State governors' aides	4
Curriculum directors	4
Directors/coordinators of Indian education or federal programs	7
Miscellaneous	8
Director of state special education (1), director of state Indian advisory council (1), members of state Indian advisory councils (2), administrator of financial services for state department of education (1), director of personnel for state department of education (1), Indian Education Association directors (2)	
TOTAL	42

<u>Local Level</u>	<u>Number</u>
Superintendents	16
Principals	16
Indian education directors/coordinators/directors of federal programs	22
Teachers	10
School board members	13
Parents	16
Children	6
Tribal officials	8
TOTAL	107

The following school districts were surveyed:

ALASKA — Anchorage, Fairbanks, Nome

MINNESOTA — Bagley, Cass Lake, Cloquet, Deer River, Minneapolis

MONTANA — Browning, Great Falls, Hardin, Helena, Lake Deer

OKLAHOMA — Catoosa, Ketchum, Lawton, McAlester, Nowata

SOUTH DAKOTA — Eagle Butte, Rapid City, Todd County, Winner

The following areas were used to identify questions and responses.

General categories used in the question and response analysis include the following

Educators	Tribal Officials
Government Officials	Students
Parents	

These categories are used in all question and response statistical charts.

A specific breakdown of the above general categories is as follows:

<u>Educators</u>	
<u>State Level</u>	<u>Number</u>
Chief state school officers	5
State chancellors/commissioners of higher education	4
State school board members/chairmen	5
State curriculum directors	4
Directors/coordinators of Indian education or federal programs	7
Miscellaneous	8
Director of state special education (1), director of state Indian advisory council (1), members of state Indian advisory council (2), administrator of financial services for state department of education (1), director of personnel for state department of education (1), Indian Education Association directors (2)	
TOTAL	33

<u>Local Level</u>	<u>Number</u>
School superintendents	16
School principals — elementary, junior, senior high	16
Indian education directors/coordinators/directors of federal programs	22
Teachers — all levels	10
School board members	13
TOTAL	77

<u>Government Officials</u>	<u>Number</u>
State legislators	5
Governors' aides	4
TOTAL	9
Tribal Officials	8
Parents	16
Students	6
OVERALL RESPONSE TOTAL	149

Responses were grouped under the categories of programs, legislative/policy issues, interpersonal relationships, fiscal issues, and agency interrelationships.

Program Effectiveness, Issues and Concerns

In this category, questions were posed to (1) determine how effective Indian education programs in the schools were and (2) ask respondents how programs could be improved for Indian children.

Do educators, government officials, tribal officials, parents and children believe that educational programs are directed at the needs of Indian students?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Most school administrators and officials believe that the schools already do a good job of meeting the educational needs of Indian children. Their attitudes
Educators	68	42	0	
Government officials	2	6	1	
Parents	4	10	2	
Tribal officials	0	7	1	
Students	2	4	0	
TOTAL	76	69	4	

might best be summarized by the following statement:

All curricular programs were designed to meet the needs of all students. Schools exist for all students. Indian needs are not all that unique and can be addressed through regular programs.

There are a number of educators who do not agree with the above officials. Their responses indicate they believe schools need to improve Indian pupils' reading and mathematical skills, and that schools need to include more Indian culture in the regular curriculum.

Most tribal officials and parents agree with the latter. They also believe

the public schools do not often reflect the Indian culture, including traditions and language. Most Indian people agree that schools are not particularly sensitive to the needs and concerns of Indian children. What many Indians believe their children require may be summarized best by the following statement:

Academic programs are required that help students become proficient in the basic skills necessary to function in our society and that will help Indian children compete academically with non-Indians; counseling that helps children set goals, realize opportunities and be motivated; enough knowledge in their own Indian history, culture, background and language to understand it, be proud of it, and in the case of language — use it.

Indian people tended to believe that public schools do not perform many of these functions for Indian children.

Has the effectiveness of Indian education programs been evaluated?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Educators, legislators, tribal officials and parents agree that few evaluations have been performed to determine the effectiveness of Indian education programs in the schools. The survey also indicated that respondents
On the state level	12	20	20	
On the local level	25	47	25	
<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	
Educators	31	52	27	
Government officials	3	2	4	
Parents	2	7	7	
Tribal officials	1	6	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	37	67	45	

believe the school districts need to do more assessments of the effectiveness of Indian bicultural and bilingual programs for Indian children.

Do Indian students perform well in the school system, compared with non-Indian students?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Respondents to this question generally believed that Indian students perform at a lower achievement level than do non-Indian
Educators	37	63	10	
Government officials	2	6	1	
Parents	4	10	2	
Tribal officials	0	7	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	43	86	20	

students. Some educators stated, however, that many Indian pupils either performed as well as did non-Indian children or excelled in spite of the system.

Have any studies been done to document achievement differences between Indian and non-Indian students?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	The survey indicated very few studies on achievement differences between Indian and non-Indian students have been done. Several respondents referred
Educators	26	52	32	
Government officials	1	2	6	
Parents	1	6	9	
Tribal officials	0	3	5	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	28	63	58	

to in-house studies that indicated Indian students generally did not do well when compared to non-Indian students. A 1978 study by the Minneapolis Public School District, for instance, demonstrated that Indian students scored somewhat lower on achievement tests than did non-Indian pupils.

Are there special counseling programs that address the unique needs of Indian students?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Most respondents indicated no special efforts were made to counsel Indian students.
Educators	32	55	23	
Government officials	1	3	5	
Parents	2	10	4	
Tribal officials	0	6	2	
Students	0	0	6	A number of school districts indicated their federally-
TOTAL	35	74	40	

funded programs often have counselors and tutors working to help Indian students. Home visits with students and parents, academic counseling, remedial summer work in the classroom, and job counseling were some of the special functions counselors performed for Indian students.

Many educators, legislators and school board members thought no special counseling efforts were required for Indian students. Tribal officials and Indian parents, however, believed special counseling and tutoring were necessary to help Indian pupils remain in school. Indian people also thought schools did very little counseling that worked at slowing down the absenteeism and dropout rate for Indian students.

What are the most important unresolved Indian education problems?

	Educators and Government Officials	Indian Officials Parents and Students
Parental involvement/concern for education of Indian children	44	10
Misinformation that non-Indian teachers/administrators have about Indians	26	4
Basic skills for Indian pupils	15	3
Need for more Indian teachers and school administrators	11	4
Problems with federal policies	7	na
Indian pupil dropout rates, absenteeism	4	2
Lack of Indian curricular materials in the classroom	4	2
Problems with parental alcoholism	4	1
Severe student use of drugs	4	2
Teacher bias toward Indian students	na	2
TOTAL	119	30

A significant number of respondents indicated that parental involvement with and concern for the education of Indian children was the most important unresolved Indian education problem in the schools. Educators and government officials believed Indian parents should be more concerned about school attendance and classroom performance of their children. Most of these respondents also thought Indian parents generally do not want to be too involved with the education of their children, but that Indian parents could be involved with the process if they would choose to participate.

Indian tribal officials and parents, however, stated that school officials often intimidated Indian people, kept Indian parents uninformed and avoided the inclusion of Indian people in educational decision making whenever possible.

Indian parents and tribal leaders suggested, too, that while Indian advisory boards were required by Title IV-A of the Indian Education Act of 1972 and The Johnson O'Malley (JOM) Act, this opportunity for Indian input into the education process was largely ineffective, since most school administrations were reluctant to give sufficient authority or credibility to these advisory boards.

Some Indian people also indicated that local school districts often refused federal dollars for Indian-related programs so that school officials and teachers would not have to work with Indian parents and people from the Indian community.

Many respondents agreed that another and sometimes complex

unresolved problem with Indian education involved the need for more attention to "basic skills" for the Indian student in the classroom. Respondents generally believed that the public schools gave very little attention to the fact that many Indian students came into the usual classroom setting with below-normal basic skills.

Lack of Indian teachers and administrators was another frequently cited problem. Some respondents thought school districts hired very few Indian teachers and administrators. Indian parents and tribal people thought, too, that many insensitive non-Indian teachers and staff caused Indian students to leave the classroom, and that the use of more Indian teachers and administrators could help to resolve this problem.

For the most part, both state and local educators and government people indicated another unresolved Indian education problem was the fact that some federal programs like JOM, now contract directly with tribal councils, or parent committees. As a consequence, the state and local district is excluded from active participation in the use of federal funds. They believe this policy interferes with and contradicts primary state and local responsibility for the education of all children — Indian and non-Indian.

Other problems mentioned by the respondents included serious dropout rates among Indian students, Indian pupil absenteeism, lack of Indian studies and language in the curriculum, and teachers uncommitted to helping Indian students with their individual needs and concerns. A few school board officials and superintendents indicated there were no significant unresolved Indian education problems.

Legislative/Policy Issues

Questions in this category were designed to determine (1) if Indian education was a major legislative/policy concern in the "target" states, (2) what legislative changes should be made in Indian education, (3) what changes could be made without the need for legislation, (4) how Indian parents participate in policy decision making, (5) how state department of education or federal policies affect Indian education, and (6) if schools exercise affirmative action and/or Indian preferences in hiring practices.

Is Indian education considered to be a priority in your state?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Many educators and state government officials felt that Indian education was not a major priority for their states, but that it should be
Educators	20	70	20	
Government officials	1	7	1	
Parents	1	13	2	
Tribal officials	0	7	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	22	97	30	

because of large Indian populations within their state boundaries. A few principals and school board members in Montana, South Dakota and Oklahoma believed Indian education programs, particularly bicultural/bilingual education, should be required only where large concentrations of Indian people were located. Still a few other educators and government officials stated that the public schools should put more emphasis on the improvement of basic skills (reading, writing, mathematics) for Indian pupils to enable these children to "catch up" with the academic mainstream of American society.

Most Indian people did not believe either legislators or educators view Indian education as a major state priority. Many parents, coordinators and directors of Indian education programs at state and local levels felt that improving Indian education for Indian children should be a major state priority. They believed it was important to preserve the basic Indian traditions, cultures and languages, and that it was a responsibility of the public schools to help parents do so.

A number of Indian people said, too, that the states regarded Indian education as a federal responsibility. Consequently, the states were reluctant to fund any special programs for Indian children.

Do state laws directly or indirectly address Indian education?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Respondents indicated that only a few state statutes dealt with Indian education. For instance, the state of South Dakota requires three hours of
Educators	10	80	20	
Government officials	2	5	2	
Parents	0	12	4	
Tribal officials	0	6	2	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	12	103	34	

American Indian studies for teacher candidates in South Dakota colleges and universities. Montana has an Indian studies teacher certification requirement that is optional. Minnesota has an Indian Language and Culture Education Act that strongly commits the state to Indian education. The Minnesota Act also contains special provisions for teacher certification.

Alaskan legislation focuses on local control of education that gives Indians and Alaskan Natives input on curriculum and materials. This need was expressed by a number of Indian parents and educators responding to the survey.

Oklahoma does not have specific Indian education legislation in existence. Educators and legislators responding to the questionnaire tended to believe the state should not legislate "curriculum." Indian parents and communities and a number of educators indicated that Indians were a very important population in Oklahoma and therefore, Indian education should be a major priority for the state.

Are there any state education policies that you consider to be barriers to meeting the educational needs of Indian people?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Most respondents did not believe state education policies were barriers to meeting the education needs of Indian people. Some educators believed certification
Educators	10	64	36	
Government officials	2	5	2	
Parents	1	10	5	
Tribal officials	1	6	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	14	85	50	

requirements were too exact and prevented otherwise qualified Indian people from teaching Indian cultures, traditions and languages in their states.

In a few states, state laws and/or state department of education policies required or suggested that teachers take course work in Indian-related areas. A few respondents objected that often requirements for teachers to take Indian studies exempted teachers already in the profession and also teachers coming into the system from other states. These educators felt all teachers should be required to take a number of Indian studies courses, especially if they planned to teach on or near a reservation area.

Tribal leaders and Indian parents were generally supportive of state education policies except to suggest that teacher certification requirements should be more flexible.

Are there federal policies that you consider to be barriers to meeting the needs of Indian people?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	The people interviewed found federal policies to be often unclear to them in terms of working with federally-financed programs at all levels of education and
Educators	73	31	6	
Government officials	4	2	3	
Parents	10	3	3	
Tribal officials	6	1	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	93	37	19	

government. Most respondents thought federal rules and regulations needed to be much more flexible, logical, nonduplicating and clear. A number of Indian people responding to the questionnaire indicated that federal policies that based funding on "numbers," needed to be replaced by an emphasis on "need."

Do you have affirmative action policies that impact upon the hiring of Indian staff?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Educators working directly with affirmative action plans stated that Indian preference occurred only when federally-funded programs required that
Educators	12	58	40	
Government officials	1	6	2	
Parents	0	9	7	
Tribal officials	1	4	3	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	14	77	58	

Indian people be hired. Government officials and state and local educators said every effort was made to hire Indian people, but very few Indians applied for either teaching or administrative positions.

Parents and tribal leaders agreed that very few Indian people were hired by local school districts. They also believe very little effort was made by school districts to recruit and hire Indian people, particularly in areas where large concentrations of Indians exist.

Interpersonal Relationships

Questions in this category were designed to determine (1) how good relationships are between the schools and Indian people, (2) how well Indians are involved with the schools, (3) how Indian and non-Indian students relate, (4) how Indian students and their parents feel about the schools, and (5) how social and health problems affect the education of Indian children.

Are relationships between parents and the schools good?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Many educators and government leaders thought relationships between the parents and the school were good to excellent. Their common opinion was
Educators	68	20	22	
Government officials	6	1	2	
Parents	2	12	2	
Tribal officials	1	6	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	77	39	33	

that parents generally liked what the schools did for Indian students in terms of curriculum options, and that the schools usually communicated quite well with Indian parents and communities.

This belief did not correspond with how Indian parents felt about the

schools. A number of Indian people thought many non-Indian teachers and administrators discriminated actively against Indian pupils in the public schools, and that schools and school districts often excluded parents and people from the Indian community who wished to participate in school decisions and activities.

Some Indian leaders and parents suggested that many of them were afraid to "make waves," for fear their children would be subject to reprisals by non-Indian teachers and administrators.

Are relationships between children and the schools good?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Government officials and educators tended to agree that most Indian children had no unusual problems with the schools. Some educators, especially
Educators	65	20	25	
Government officials	7	1	1	
Parents	4	7	5	
Tribal officials	1	4	3	
Students	1	3	2	
TOTAL	78	35	36	

at the local level, did indicate that in some school districts, teacher and staff insensitivity ran high against Indian pupils. And a number of school district officials reported physical fighting between black and Indian students was a very common occurrence. These same educators believed clashes between Indian and non-Indian students usually increased at about the seventh or eighth grade. Some teachers and school administrators also stated that a large number of Indian students dropped out of school at that level.

Indian parents and tribal officials suggested that a near-void of Indian teachers and administrators, a curriculum that usually did little to meet the unique needs and concerns of Indian students, and a general lack of understanding among non-Indian teachers and administrators about the Indian lifestyle were the primary reasons why most Indian students did not graduate from the public schools. Indian children believed they were often deliberately excluded from activities and at the high school level in particular, that non-Indian students discriminated against them.

Do social and health problems affect Indian pupil learning, absenteeism, retention and dropout rates in your state?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>
Educators	84	20	6
Government officials	7	2	0
Parents	13	2	1
Tribal officials	6	1	1
Students	0	0	6
TOTAL	110	25	14

What social and health problems affect Indian pupil learning, absenteeism, retention and dropout rates in your state?

<u>Type of Problem</u>	<u>Number</u>
Parental chemical dependency	72
Poverty in the home	36
Poor sanitation and living conditions	12
Hearing/ear infection problems	10
Student chemical dependency	8
Others	6
No answer	5
TOTAL	149

Many Indian pupils from all five states faced home environments where parents often had a severe chemical dependency. Indian children in an alcoholic/drug-use environment did poorly in school. Indian pupils from homes where poverty and poor sanitation occurred also did poorly in school and often left school before graduation. Absenteeism was also a common occurrence for many Indian students, and was often attributed to poverty stricken homes and chemically-dependent parents by many of the respondents including educators, government officials, parents, tribal people and other interviewed. On a number of occasions, student chemical dependency also caused excessive pupil absenteeism.

Many Indian students from South Dakota, Alaska and Minnesota had severe ear infections that also interfered with hearing. Often this medical problem had not been detected when the Indian student came into the school system and had not been addressed by teachers who assumed that these students were slow learners. Respondents from Oklahoma generally saw few unique health problems for Indian students in that state. However, these people did indicate that students transferring from a rural environment into an urban school district often had emotional adjustment problems that required special attention from the schools.

Many educators and government officials did not believe that many Indian parents encouraged their children to attend school. These people believed, therefore, that because of this apparent lack of parental interest in education, many Indian children missed school excessively and eventually dropped out of school.

Tribal leaders and parents agreed that frequent family quarrels involving alcoholic parents sometimes affected the normal encouragement for children to attend school. Indian people also suggested that schools were not "tuned in" to Indian cultures, languages and traditions; that non-Indian teachers, counselors and administrators were not understanding of the close-knit "extended family" relationship that existed among most Indians; and that school officials often did nothing to overcome problems of poverty, poor nutrition, poor sanitation in the home and other adverse family situations that in turn caused extensive

Indian student absenteeism, lack of student interest in course work and substandard Indian pupil classroom performance.

Fiscal Issues

Are the present methods of financing public schools effective? Who should finance education? How effective has federal assistance been for Indian education?

Is the current mechanism for funding education adequate?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Educators and government officials generally responded that the tax base for financing education was inadequate in most instances, and too often local school districts
Educators	32	58	20	
Government officials	1	5	3	
Parents	3	10	3	
Tribal officials	4	3	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	40	76	33	

relied on the property tax to finance the public schools. Many educators and government officials wanted the state legislature to provide a funding mechanism that would more evenly distribute the tax dollar to all school districts, including those with large Indian reservations with limited or no property tax base. These people suggested the so-called "richer" districts usually had more than their fair share of tax dollars for education.

A significant number of government people and educators believed more dollars should be provided at the state level for Indian education programs, but that control over the distribution of these funds should remain at the local level. Some people in government and education stated that the state, local school district and federal government should all share in the financing of Indian education. However, many legislators and educators also felt the federal government should provide most of the funding for categorical Indian education programs.

Some educators and government people objected to separate non-Indian and Indian school systems. They believed federal policies were beginning to encourage what seemed to them to be a costly and largely-duplicating effort.

Indian parents and tribal officials did not feel the state did very much for Indian bicultural and bilingual studies, or for the expansion of needed basic skills curriculum for Indian students. They also believed states had both moral and legal obligations to provide funding for unique Indian education programs.

Indian people suggested that states could not always count on federal dollars to fund Indian-oriented programs, and that if the federal

government should ever decrease its funding of Indian education, local districts would drop important and successful Indian education programs out of the school curriculum. They also argued that since the states have the basic responsibility for providing a free public education for all children, the state also has to assume more fiscal responsibility toward providing unique Indian education programs.

Do you believe that federal funds have been used effectively for Indian education?

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	Most of the respondents, including many educators, government officials, tribal officials and parents, believed that federal funds usually had permitted school districts
Educators	73	21	16	
Government officials	7	1	1	
Parents	14	1	1	
Tribal officials	6	1	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	100	24	25	

to serve Indian students well and had persuaded many more of these pupils to remain in school until graduation. They cited favorable Indian retention statistics in federally-funded projects, positive parent and student opinions, successful counseling and tutoring efforts and important curricular offerings as the rationale for their feelings that most federal funding of Indian education had been worthwhile and successful.

While a majority of respondents indicated that federal dollars had effectively expanded and improved learning opportunities and environments for most Indian children, they also felt less government control over how federal dollars were spent in the states would be very useful to local school districts. Most Indian tribal officials and parents did not want more state control over the allocation of federal funds for Indian education and insisted that more tribal control over funding distribution is required at the local level.

Agency Interrelationships

Questions in this category were designed to determine (1) how local, state, federal and tribal entities worked together in terms of Indian education and (2) what the role of higher education should be in Indian education.

Do the various levels of government and education work well together to address the needs of Indian students?

Many of the respondents did not believe education and government work well together. A significant number of people thought conflicting local, state and federal jurisdictions and rules and regulations caused

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	confusion and prevented all these agencies from effectively serving Indian children. Many of the respondents also believed the federal government basically
Educators	36	48	26	
Government officials	3	4	2	
Parents	5	10	1	
Tribal officials	2	5	1	
Students	0	0	6	
TOTAL	46	67	36	

was responsible for the conflicting jurisdictions, rules and regulations.

Most respondents wanted the federal government to fund a number of Indian education programs and to decrease the rules and regulations that were associated with the funding of Indian education programs. Educators, government officials, tribal officials, parents and others interviewed, generally agreed that the federal government should fund Indian education programs but delegate the administration to the local and tribal level.

A number of educators, government officials and tribal people wanted their state departments of education to provide stronger and more comprehensive leadership in the education of Indian children. They wanted local school districts, in particular, to develop Indian education curriculum and to provide their own inservice cultural awareness programs for non-Indian teachers and staff.

Indian people generally agreed that local school districts should provide much more significant communication than was being provided. They also wanted the local school districts to involve Indian parents and communities in all education decision making affecting Indian children.

Most Indian parents, tribal leaders and directors of Indian education at the local level agreed that the tribal role in education was inadequate. Educators and government officials indicated that most Indian people did not have a clear idea of what the Indian role in education should be and often did not make clear to the schools what they expected from them. Therefore, educators and government people suggested that Indian tribes/communities needed to delineate clearly for the schools what they expected and wanted for their children.

Indian parents and tribal leaders indicated they made an effort to let the public schools clearly know what Indian children required from an educational environment. They suggested that most non-Indian teachers and school administrators did not listen to concerns expressed by Indians and, therefore, did not often work cooperatively with the Indian people.

Does higher education play a significant role in Indian education?

Many respondents to the questionnaire indicated that institutions of higher education did very little for Indian education. Most individuals thought colleges and universities should do more in teacher training and

<u>Category</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>No opinion</u>	inservice training for teachers in cooperation with local school districts, and preparation of counselors for Indian students in the public schools.
Educators	31	56	23	
Government officials	3	4	2	
Parents	4	11	1	
Tribal officials	2	4	2	
Students	0	1	5	
TOTAL	40	76	33	

Educators, government officials and Indian people generally agreed that higher education institutions should work more cooperatively with public schools to provide counseling and tutoring, along with basic skills programs, to help Indian students remain in college until graduation. Many of the respondents definitely agreed that higher education institutions had a very important obligation to Indian students.

Miscellaneous Findings and Observations

During the interview process, staff and consultants were given responses that pertained to Indian education but not necessarily to the questions listed and asked from the survey instrument. Staff determined that these responses, nevertheless, were pertinent and necessary to any discussion of Indian education. Respondents indicated the following:

- Indian people were pleased to be included in the survey. Often various local, regional and national task forces and commissions have ignored them in their various studies on Indian education.
- Few Indian parents except those on special committees understand state and federal laws that affect the education of Indian students.
- Indian-controlled community colleges are generally doing an excellent job of teaching Indian people who elect to stay on the reservation after graduation from a reservation high school.
- The requirement of verifying tribal enrollment often presents serious difficulties for Indian students who are eligible for scholarship and loan funds but cannot prove it.
- Some school superintendents indicated that were it not for the inclusion of vocational education curriculum in the regular school programs, their schools would have fewer than 50 percent of their presently enrolled Indian students remaining in school.
- Many Indian people stated that although non-Indians were usually misinformed about Indian cultures, traditions and languages, there was no concerted effort in the states to resolve this problem through the public school systems.
- A number of Indian people suggested that state superinten-

dents of education, departments of education and board of education members did not communicate very well with tribes and/or Indian parents.

Indian Education reports available from the ECS Publications Department:

Report No. 135

Indian Education: Involvement of Federal, State and Tribal Governments

Report No. 136

Indian Education: Problems in Need of Resolution

Report No. 137

Indian Education: Selected Programs and Practices

Report No. 138

Indian Education: Policy Recommendations

Report No. 139

Indian Education: An Overview of State Laws and Policies

Report No. 140

Indian Education: Final Project Report

Additional copies of these reports may be obtained from the Publications Department, Education Commission of the States, Suite 300, 1860 Lincoln St., Denver, Colorado 80295. Please enclose \$3 for the first report ordered. For each subsequent copy of any report listed above, please add 30¢. This price covers postage and handling. Prepayment required.



Education Commission of the States

The Education Commission of the States is a nonprofit organization formed by interstate compact in 1966. Forty-eight states, American Samoa, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands are now members. Its goal is to further a working relationship among governors, state legislators and educators for the improvement of education. This report is an outcome of one of many commission undertakings at all levels of education. The commission offices are located at Suite 300, 1360 Lincoln Street, Denver, Colorado 80295.

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